



Trim Down



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Chapter 1 by Dana Busby

Fingers high, shoulders back. I knew if I just stayed focused, I could win this like I have won the past five competitions. I narrowed my eyes at the red onion on my cutting board; this onion would NOT make me cry. I sliced it in half and then smoothly cut three horizontal slices, then several vertical slices. Then chop, chop, chop, chop. When I cook I get in this zone where time has both stopped and is on fast forward.

"And time!" The MC yelled in his prim voice.

I was happy with my recipe: a spin on fish tacos. Everything fresh, bright, and beautiful. My twist is the mayo used to bind the panko bread crumbs to the fish. --The recipe is for a Helman's competition.

I sized up the judges panel. My nemesis, Amy Parker happened to be one of the judges. My biggest joy in life was competing; hers was judging. She has judged several of my competitions, and she turns the panel against me every time. All of the judges can give me positive reviews except her, but then in the end they always end up singing her tune. I didn't know what she had against me, but my dearest prayer before every competition was that she would not be on the panel.

The judges were nodding and smiling as they tasted my fish tacos, chewing slowly and thoughtfully while carrying on light conversation about the flavor bouquet I had provided. I smiled stiffly, eyeing up Amy. She looked smug and had only taken one bite of her perfectly prepared taco. Pitch. The panel moved on and tried the other contestant's tacos. Some were

received favorably others with a roll of the tongue.

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We waited while the judge

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"It was a difficult decision," began the MC kindly, "buuut, the judges have selected the Charlene Fredrick's recipe. Congratulations, Charlene, you are the winner of \$5,000 and your recipe will be featured on Helman's jars!"

I felt like my brain was going to explode. My taco was by far better than hers; she didn't even have an acidic element! Damn that Amy.

If I wanted to have a nationally recognized recipe, Amy had to go.

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